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Report  
Analysis of the Office of Personnel  
Personnel Management Program Opinion Survey  
Summer 1976  
(DDA Career Service Respondents)

25X9 1. (S) This report is based on data taken from the Office of Personnel opinion survey conducted in the summer of 1976 which randomly sampled approximately [REDACTED] of the Agency's staff employee population. The response rate for the DDA Career Service of 66 percent, although quite satisfactory, is below the Agency average. It may be observed that the distribution of responses is rather evenly spread and is representative of DDA manpower levels.

Category	Number/Respondents*	Percentage	
		DDA ODS**	DDA Sample
A. <u>Pay Grade (Level)</u>	25X9		
1 to 4	[REDACTED]	4	3
5 to 8	[REDACTED]	24	24
9 to 11	[REDACTED]	35	30
12 to 13	[REDACTED]	24	26
14 to 15	[REDACTED]	11	15
16 and above	[REDACTED]	2	2
B. <u>Sex</u>			
Male	[REDACTED]	77	76
Female	[REDACTED]	23	24

\* The values in each category do not agree with the overall total of returns [REDACTED] because some respondents elected not to provide selected background information.

\*\* On duty strength as of 12/76

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<u>Category</u>	<u>Number/Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	
		<u>DDA ODS</u>	<u>DDA Sample</u>
C. <u>Ethnic Group</u>	25X9		
Minority Group		8	6
Non-Minority Group		92	94
D. <u>Age</u>			
25 or below		11	10
26 - 34		27	26
35 - 44		33	33
45 and over		30	31
E. <u>Geographic Location</u>			
Headquarters			
Washington Metropolitan Area		66	77
25X1A			
		16	10
		18	13

2. (A/IUO) This report is specifically intended to assist DDA management officials in identifying possible problem areas in their administration of various personnel management programs. For this reason, the analysis calls attention to and tends to emphasize negative employee responses. Research in survey evaluation methodology indicates that a negative rate of 20% or less is not usually significant. Negative response levels grow in significance as they approach the 40% mark, and those exceeding the 40% level are usually highly significant and serious enough to deserve special attention and possible action. These percentages may be used with reasoned flexibility.

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3. (C) Employee responses are examined by major topic area and, as warranted reference is made to population statistics such as age groups, GS levels, sex, etc.

a. Manpower Utilization/Work Recognition

(1) Most DDA respondents feel they are making good use of their skills and abilities on the job and are given enough work to do. The newer employee, however, i.e. those having no more than four years of Agency service, and those in the GS 5-8 grade range, are slightly less affirmative than others in their responses to these questions. Survey findings indicate that a relatively small majority of these employees like the kind of work they are doing. There is also evidence of concern among respondents about the level of the work they perform. Some 40% of those with advanced degrees and those in the GS 12-15 grade range believe that higher level employees do too much lower level work.

(2) In general, survey results support the conclusion that DDA careerists are being utilized properly and are being given adequate recognition for the work they perform. A solid majority of DDA respondents feel that the job of their component is being accomplished efficiently, and that they have enough to say in how to do their work.

b. Career Development/Career Counseling

(1) Opinion is divided about whether or not the DDA Career Service is fulfilling its responsibilities in the area of career management. Careerists with Agency service of 2-4 years, or who lack college degrees, or who are female express less satisfaction with present DDA career management programs than others. Approximately twenty-five to thirty percent of the respondents in each of those demographic categories hold the opinion that the DDA Career Service is meeting its responsibilities in this subject area.

(2) Less than half of the survey respondents acknowledge having an awareness of DDA Developmental Profiles. A rather small majority of older employees (45 years and above) say they receive encouragement for further development, and only a bare majority of respondents (51%) belonging to an ethnic minority claim they receive such encouragement.

(3) Although a substantial number of DDA Careerists feel free to discuss their career interests and problems with a counselor, a two-thirds majority of survey respondents are not satisfied that the Career Service provides for employee career development needs. Employees having the least service and those at

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the lower grade levels are much less knowledgeable about DDA counseling service, i.e., they do not know where to go or whom to see. Survey results indicate that employees located in the Washington Metropolitan Area (outside the Headquarters Building) are less satisfied with Career Service (or Subgroup) assistance on career related matters.

(4) There is evidence to suggest that many DDA employees are anxious about revealing their interests in seeking reassignments. To a significant extent, employees in the 26-34 age range and those in grades GS-9-11 are more inclined than other DDA respondents to feel they would jeopardize their standing in their Career Service Subgroup by replying to a vacancy notice. Only 24 percent of all survey respondents believe the Agency vacancy notice system works satisfactorily. (N.B. This fact should be considered in relation to the DDA position in Addendum I where DDA employee opinion on this question is compared with Agency employee opinion.)

c. Training

(1) Survey results clearly establish that a very large majority of respondents received Agency-sponsored training. In addition, the data supports a conclusion that on a percentage basis more men than women receive such training. More women than men feel they have not made adequate use of their training. Only 50 percent of the women respondents believe they have been able to apply what they gained from Agency training. This opinion is shared by many of those in the GS-5-8 grade range and by those employees who have been with the Agency less than four years.

(2) Significantly fewer employees who have never been promoted claim to have received Agency-sponsored training. This finding may reflect more the opinion of the new employee who because of brief tenure has not been promoted, rather than the employee who has been with the Agency several years and is still waiting for the first promotion. There appears to be a correlation between promotions and training, but the unresolved question is the order in which they occur.

d. Promotions/Performance Evaluation

(1) Less than half of the DDA survey participants express satisfaction with promotion opportunities. In this regard, respondents not having a full college education and those at grade GS-11 and below are considerably less satisfied; just 30 percent of

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these respondents are satisfied with promotion prospects. Survey data also reveals that low to mid-level employees are less inclined than employees at grades GS-12 and above to feel that promotions are given fairly, and supervisors are much more satisfied about the fairness of promotions than those who are not supervisors. For the most part, however, Career Service attitudes are evenly split on the basic question: there are as many respondents unsure of their feelings on this matter as there are ones who are either satisfied or dissatisfied.

(2) Headquarters employees and those in the Washington Metropolitan Area are less understanding of their Career Service Subgroup promotion system than those located overseas. It is quite possible that employees selected for overseas service have more confidence in Career Service competitive evaluation and career management systems than do employees who are not selected for such duty.

(3) While a large majority of respondents claim to understand the difference between a job description and a Letter of Instruction, the young, comparatively new employee, and those in grades GS-8 and below are not nearly as sure of the distinction.

(4) The Fitness Report is endorsed by most respondents as an accurate reflection of their job performance. Naturally, those who have not been promoted in the past three years are less inclined toward this opinion. Female employees and those in the GS-5-8 grade range (which may very well reflect the same employee sample) are not as aware as others of the criteria upon which their supervisor determines their Fitness Report rating. Substantially less than half of these employees claim to understand their Career Subgroup comparative evaluation system. The fact is that only 57% of all respondents claim to understand the system.

e. Equal Employment Opportunity

(1) While a slim majority of respondents (52%) feel that younger employees are not treated better than older employees, a third of those having 20 years or more of Agency service or who are older than forty-five years of age disagree. The question is understandably a sensitive one for older employees and thus the response is not unexpected.

(2) Approximately half the respondents believe that racial minority and female employees are treated the same as other employees. The viewpoint of the remaining 50% of the respondents is divided, but the tendency is for the larger body of opinion to be that racial minorities are treated better and that females are

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treated worse than other employees. Survey results suggest that equal employment opportunity is more of a concern to female employees than to those belonging to an ethnic minority. However, the number of ethnic minority employees in the DDA is small and this makes it rather difficult to draw conclusions. The fact is that 46 percent of the respondents belonging to an ethnic minority group feel they are treated worse than other employees (size of employee sample = 47 persons). According to survey results, both female employees (66%) and those of an ethnic minority (57%) believe the Agency is making progress in providing equal employment opportunity for all employees.

f. Compensation/Recognition

(1) Approximately one-third of the survey respondents think the Agency's Honor and Merit Awards programs are effective, and nearly half are of the opinion that management does not make appropriate use of the Quality Step Increase as a means of employee recognition. These results are somewhat surprising inasmuch as a large majority of respondents (71%) are satisfied they are being given credit for a job well done.

(2) Sixty-seven percent of the respondents feel their pay is fair for the job they do, but for those having less than four years' service the percentage expressing satisfaction drops to 52 percent. A comparable percentage of respondents at the grades GS-8 and below salary levels hold the same opinion. Survey data also reveals that the likelihood of satisfaction with the fairness of pay increases as the age of the responding employee increases. A long-term freeze on supergrade employee salaries was in effect at the time the survey was conducted, consequently, these employees reflect much less satisfaction with their pay.

g. Grievances/Adverse Actions

Survey results show that the knowledge of and satisfaction with Career Service and Agency grievance procedures tends to increase with the grade, age, and length of service of the employee. Nearly half of the respondents (43%) claim ignorance of the Career Service grievance system. Less than a third of the respondents feel they understand how people in the Career Service are selected out or the procedures for declaring employees to be "... excess to the manpower requirements of their Directorate".

h. Advancement Opportunities

(1) Some 40 percent of the respondents feel they do not have adequate opportunities for advancement. The higher the

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grade of the respondent the more likely is the individual to be satisfied with his or her career opportunities. Nearly twice as many men as women are satisfied with their opportunities for intra-Career Service rotational assignment. Survey results also suggest that the higher the individual's grade and level of education the more apt he or she is to be satisfied with prospects for intra-Career Service movement.

(2) A different trend emerges with respect to opportunities for transfers to other Directorates. Employee satisfaction tends to decrease as the years of service, grade, and age of the employee increases. Supervisory employee perceptions indicate they are much more encouraged about their career prospects than are employees in non-supervisory positions.

i. Morale

(1) The morale of DDA careerists may be described as moderately good. Morale, of course, is influenced by several factors and the identity of these factors in many cases may be inferred from the data contained in respondents' written remarks (See Addendum II). Statistical data shows a relationship between the level of morale of employees and the length of time since their last promotion. This finding comes as no surprise as it is popularly accepted that the greater the number of years an employee works without benefit of a promotion the greater the probability that his or her morale will suffer.

(2) Nearly half of the survey respondents think the Agency's ability to fulfill its function will be hampered in the short term as a result of Congressional investigations, disclosures, etc. A similar number of respondents feel that the investigations will have a beneficial effect on the Agency's operations in the long run. Among the relatively few respondents who believe that external pressure (investigation, disclosures, etc.) have had a significant negative influence on their ability to do their job, a large percentage are at the GS-14 and above grade levels.

4. (C) Conclusions:

a. An important purpose of the Agency-wide survey was to establish a base line against which future survey data could be compared. The significance of some of the data compiled from this survey must be viewed as tentative until subsequent surveys provide a normative reference for interpreting employee attitudes.

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b. It must be noted that conditions both internal and external to the Agency were anything but normal at the time the survey was conducted. Major public attention was drawn to its operations for the first time in the Agency's history. A great many employees, who believed that the missions and operations of the Agency were always in the national interest, had their faith shaken by successive Agency Directors who admonished them to be ever vigilant for illegalities and wrongdoing in the work activities of their colleagues. Disclosures by former employees about their work created an additional source of anxiety and concern. Such revelations by former employees were without precedent.

c. Survey data suggest, however, that many employee concerns are rooted in internal matters. Career management, for example, is strongly criticized; the majority of DDA careerists believe that their Career Service has not been helpful in providing assistance on career related matters. Other findings suggest that newly hired employees and those in the lower grades are not as satisfied as others with the kind of work they are doing, and highly educated employees are inclined to feel obliged to do too much lower level work. It is of obvious importance to management that Agency employees, especially newcomers, feel challenged by their work. Although many employees feel free to seek assistance from career counselors, few evidently find much satisfaction. The role and responsibilities of career counselors should be made clear in the minds of both managers and non-managers; if not, dissatisfaction and frustration with the counseling program will continue.

d. The fact that a rather large number of DDA careerists feel they might jeopardize their standing in the career service by responding to a vacancy notice warrants management's attention. This type of employee apprehension is often manifested by those lacking confidence in the integrity of management policy. These employees fear that management voices adherence to certain principles or procedures but, in fact, does not honor them. Anxiety and concern are experienced even by employees in smaller organizations (or components within organizations, e.g., Career Subgroups) where closeness and familiarity among the various employee levels are greater. Many of these persons conclude that personal bias is an integral part of any management decision affecting employee promotion or career development and some survey respondents allude to a "buddy system" when describing their perceptions of the Career Service (Subgroup) promotion system (See Addendum II). This reference to the promotion system exemplifies the notion that bias is a principal element in promotion decisions; survey data shows that a significant number of employees are not convinced that promotions are given fairly. Employee satisfaction

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on this matter may be an illusive goal. Nonetheless, if management is to realize the benefits of employee contentment in this personnel program area, it must improve employee perceptions.

e. The Letter of Instruction (LOI), ostensibly understood by the large majority of respondents, receives a vote of "no confidence" as a useful management tool. A special effort will be required to effectively sell the LOI concept to employees. A large number of them consider its use an empty bureaucratic exercise.

f. A minor "backlash" appears to have taken place with respect to employee attitudes toward the Career Service EEO program. Respondents feel that racial minorities are receiving preferential treatment in many instances. These individuals contend that this is in violation of the merit system. A large percentage of female employees feel they are treated worse than male employees, and statistical interpretation of the data establishes significant differences of opinion between the sexes on several survey questions. However, both ethnic minority and female employees feel the Agency is making progress in providing equal employment opportunities.

g. Although a few problem areas which are difficult to treat, stand out, personnel management practices in the DDA on the whole are in reasonably good shape. A very high percentage of DDA employees feel they are kept busy and are making good use of their skills and abilities. They tend to be satisfied with the latitude afforded them by management in trying new work methods and with the contributions they may make toward influencing how their work is to be accomplished. Many feel that improvement in personnel management methods and operations have been made in the past few years.

The Career Service has reasons to be encouraged by some of what has been learned from this employee opinion survey, but there are indeed areas in need of improvement which will be challenging to attain. The prospects for positive change are good, however.

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